

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 02168 100037Z

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ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2168

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 2168

NODIS

FOR SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, SY, US

SUBJECT: PROPOSED MEETING WITH ASAD

REF: STATE 086108, DAMASCUS 2139

1. CONCUR THAT IT IS UNDESIRABLE TO PRESS FOR MEETING WITH ASAD ON PEACE PROCESS AND UNDOF RENEWAL. I DRAFTED DAMASCUS 2139 BEFORE LATEST REPORTS OF SYRIAN MOVES TOWARDS BORDER AND THE PROSPECTS OF FIRST CONVENING THE LEBANESE PARLIAMENT AND THEN GETTING IT TO ACT DECISIVELY SEEMED QUITE SO DICEY. BOTH DEVELOPMENTS REINFORCE MY FEELING THAT IT WOULD BE INOPPORTUNE TO PRESS FOR MEETING RE PEACE PROCESS IN NEXT FEW DAYS.

2. AM TRANSMITTING BY IMMEDIATE FOLLOWING SEPTTEL OUR HUNCHES RE MOTIVATIONS SYRIAN TROOP MOVEMENTS INTO LEBANON AND TOWARDS BORDER WHICH REPORTEDLY BEGAN BEFORE DAWN TODAY. THESE ARE AT BEST EDUCATED GUESSES. DAMASCUS CONTINUES SUPERFICIALLY CALM AND WE ARE GETTING NO DIRECT READINGS FROM LEADERSHIP. I WILL SEEK MEETING WITH DAOUDI SATURDAY TO SEE IF HE HAS ANY NEW REASON WHY ASAD IS CONTINUING MAINTAIN HIS SILENCE TOWARDS OUR OFFER OF EXTROADINARY DIPLOMATIC ASSISTANCE TO SYRIAN POLICY.

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SECRET

PAGE 02 DAMASC 02168 100037Z

3. HAVE NOTED ADDITIONAL TALKING POINT. MY ONLY CONCERN ABOUT

POINTS AS THEY STAND IS THAT ASAD MAY FEEL UNCERTAIN ABOUT WHAT SPECIFIC STEPS EITHER HE OR WE SHOULD TAKE NEXT. THE POINTS ARE INTERNALLY LOGICAL AND CONSISTENT BUT I WONDER IF THEY WILL IMPRESS HIM AS AN ACTION PROGRAM.

4. WE SEEM TO BE IN THE UNPLEASANT POSITION OF HAVING BOTH SADAT AND HUSSEIN DEFER TO ASAD'S REACTION TO A PROCESS WHICH HE HAS BEEN THE FIRST TO CONDEMN (SEE HIS MARCH 8 SPEECH AS REPORTED DAMASCUS 1345.) I SUSPECT OUR BEST CHANCE OF GETTING FORWARD MOVEMENT IN SYRIA FOR THE PEACE PROCESS WILL DEVELOP IF AMBASSADOR BROWN IS AUTHORIZED TO MAKE CONTACT WITH THE PLO EVEN WITHOUT FIRST GETTING ASAD'S SPECIFIC GO AHEAD. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR BROWN'S DOING SO IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PLO'S ROLE IN THE LEBANESE CONFLICT SEEMS A GODSEND.
MURPHY

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